October 11, 2013

X-47B aircraft recognized with Popular Mechanics Breakthrough Innovator Award

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – Popular Mechanics magazine named the Navy Unmanned Combat Air System Demonstration (UCAS-D) Program's X-47B aircraft as one of its 2013 Breakthrough Award recipients in an Oct. 9 announcement.

According to Popular Mechanics, the X-47B is the first U.S. Navy product or program to be recognized since the awards began in 2005.

Navy UCAS Program Manager Capt. Jaime Engdahl said he was thrilled to hear of the award. "Now that we've demonstrated we can successfully launch, maneuver and land a large, tailless, unmanned aircraft onto an aircraft carrier, we've proven that the technologies and concept of operations are effective," Engdahl said. "The entire team is honored to be recognized with this award. It's exciting and quite unique to have an organization such as Popular Mechanics recognize our efforts and capabilities."

Part of the Program Executive Office for Unmanned Aviation and Strike Weapons, the UCAS-D team comprises Navy and industry partners. The X-47B and UCAS-D program made U.S. Navy history in 2013 with its first catapult launches, touch-and-goes, and arrested landings aboard USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77).

Popular Mechanics said it selected the X-47B because it "is the first UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) to land safely on the deck of an aircraft carrier without a human pilot. Its technology may lead to more accurate autopilot systems in private and commercial aircraft, as well as safer self-driving cars."

Headquartered at the Naval Air Systems Command, the X-47B will be featured on the magazine's November cover, which hits newsstands Oct. 15. According to the magazine, the Popular Mechanics Breakthrough Awards "honor people and companies whose work will transform the world in years to come."

The Navy UCAS demonstration is maturing technologies for carrier air wing integration, which future carrier-based unmanned programs will use for the development of aircraft carrier (CV) architecture, design, installation drawings and installation; unmanned aerial systems (UAS) CV concept of operations; and UAS CV test and certification methodologies.